

SANTA ROSA AND SAN JACINTO MOUNTAINS NATIONAL MONUMENT

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY October 2, 2004

**United States Department of Agriculture United States Department of the
Interior**

MEETING LOCATION: PALM DESERT CITY HALL
73-510 Fred Waring Drive
Palm Desert, CA 92260

DATE AND TIME: Saturday, October 2, 2004
9:00 a.m. to 2:22 p.m.

LIST OF THOSE PRESENT:

MONUMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC):

FRANK BOGERT, former Mayor, City of Palm Springs
KATHIE BRENNAN, Building Industry
BUFORD CRITES, Committee Chair and Mayor, City of Palm Desert
BARRY FREET, Palm Springs Fire Chief
TERRY HENDERSON, Councilmember, City of LaQuinta
BOB LYMAN, Regional Office Manager, County of Riverside
JEFFREY MORGAN, Sierra Club, Local Conservation Organization
ALLAN MUTH, expertise in natural science and research, University of California, Riverside, Deep Canyon Research Center
ROB PARKINS, General Manager, Winter Park Authority
MARY ROCHE, Mayor, City of Indian Wells
RUTH WATLING, Chair, Pinyon Community Council
GARY WATTS, District Superintendent, California Department of Parks and Recreation

STAFF AND PRESENTERS:

DANELLA GEORGE, Designated Federal Official and Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Manager
JOHN LADLEY, U.S. Forest Service, Outdoor Recreation Planner, representing LAURIE ROSENTHAL, District Ranger, San Jacinto Ranger District
JIM FOOTE, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner, representing ELENA

MESQUEZ, BLM Assistant Field Manager, Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office, and GAIL ACHESON, BLM Field Manager, Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office

KATIE BARROWS, Coachella Valley Association of Governments

PAM HANSEN, U.S. Forest Service, National Monument Visitor Center
Public Information Specialist

FRANK MOWY, BLM, National Monument Writer-Editor

AGENDA

Call To Order – Buford Crites, Chair

Chair called meeting to order requested assistance from DFO to call the roll.

Roll Call – Buford Crites, Chair and Danella George, DFO

Roll Call established a quorum present.

Review of Minutes – MAC members

Minutes from last meeting accepted without change.

Old/New Business – MAC members

DFO advised nominations packages for re-appointments and appointment of MAC members mailed 28 September. Nominations include new appointment for Pinyon Pines Community Council, re-appointments for City of Rancho Mirage, City of Palm Desert, natural science and research, and Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.

Nominations will first be reviewed and approved at State level, then sent forward for review, and concurrence by Secretary of Agriculture for final approval by Secretary of the Interior

Committee advised of the need to schedule meeting for coming calendar year, decision was made to add this to today's agenda.

Election of New Officers – Danella George, DFO

Single nominations made for Chair and Vice Chair positions. Buford Crites was nominated and re-elected as Chair. Gary Watts was nominated and elected as Vice Chair.

Updates –

BLM – Jim Foote, BLM

BLM update started with discussion of re-programming of the Potrero Creek Project.

Mr. Crites was able to provide some amplification to this situation, the balances have been sitting in place for a couple of years and are now “at risk” of being sent elsewhere within the U.S. Working with Congressional

members Calvert and Bono, an agreement was made to request the House Interior Appropriations Committee for a re-programming of these funds. The monies will stay in the area and be used for purchase of additional acquisitions in both eastern and western Riverside County. This is a windfall of approximately \$3 million for the Coachella Valley, as opposed of allowing this money to be sent to Idaho or Northern California. (Complete details are available in the MAC minutes transcript of this meeting.)

Mr. Foote than provided a brief update on the Signs Plan work group. Primary function is the branding of the National Monument from a multi-jurisdictional view perspective, recognizing signs are only one element of a broader communications strategy. The work group is looking at identifying overall signage needs. In order to make this plan work, everyone needs to participate in the meetings. To this end, Gary Watts, work group chair and Mr. Foote have requested MAC assistance in ensuring jurisdictions participation at the next meeting. (Complete details are available in the MAC minutes transcript of this meeting.)

USFS – John Ladley, USFS

During the discussion on the signs work group, a question came up regarding the Highway 74 sign. According to Mr. Ladley, the plan is to remove sign from present location. However, there isn't enough available funding at present to replace sign. This is in response to public outcry. During discussion, concern was expressed about not being able to immediately replace sign, and eventually a decision was made to leave sign in place until necessary sign replacement funding became available. In addition to this, there has been some suggestion of private funding sources. This discussion will be postponed until later in the meeting.

In representing Laurie Rosenthal, Mr. Ladley provided the USFS update. Direct Protection Agreement is moving forward, with the decision being BLM will be responsible for everything north of Highway 74, and USFS will cover everything to the south.

Locally Service has been receiving good press regarding fuels reduction programs. Service is attempting to share more information with public regarding threat levels and moisture levels within the Forest. Additionally through their weekly meetings, they are attempting to enter into a more systematic structure, which will allow the Service to provide more heads-up information to other agencies regarding forest closures. However, at present the goal is to keep the Forests open. The only thing, which could change this, is the weather, i.e.: Santa Ana winds, or a large fire within the district, etc. Without such an event, if a decision is being made, there should be a week and a half to two weeks notice given.

As for recreation – work is being done on upgrading and maintaining facilities and trails within the available budget. Other items included: Special use permit request from Hay Dude Ranch. The Forest Service would like to put together some field trips for MAC members in order to provide a better view of the Forest Service's participation within the National Monument.

Regarding the Hay Dude Ranch, Mr. Ladley explained how the Hay Dude Ranch group out of Anza was requesting a special use permit for the Ribbonwood Equestrian Campground. The operation would be offering horse rides on specific trails connecting to surrounding Forest Service and National Monument lands.

At present the entire campground or individual sites are available for renting by the public. The campground also includes water and toilet facilities. Located south of Highway 74, the campground is on Forest Service lands, located within the National Monument boundary. Looking at usage over the past 12 months, there has been 135 visitor use dates, and has brought in \$750. When constructed the estimate was 2800 per year, from a management point of view it appears the facility is not being fully used.

Hay Dude wants the special use permit in order to offer one, two, and possibly three-hour horse rides to the public during the day, making use of existing trails, only. They would be targeting easy, flat, family-type riding trails. Hay Dude would be staging 12 horses at Ribbonwood; the idea would be to compliment what exists and not interfere with any other campground operations. They would be located between the entrance gate and campsite property, make use of approximately an acre of land. The special use permit would allow for a 'removable' 8x12-foot portable office building and an 8x20-foot storage container, along with a 70x100 foot removable pipe corral.

There have been some concerns with water usage by this facility, these issues are being addressed and Hay Dude intends to bring in their own water for use in a 5,000 gal. water tank, filled from outside sources, for their use. Another issue under discussion is the disturbance of vegetation. (Complete details are available in the MAC minutes transcript of this meeting.)

Trails Plan – Katie Barrows, CVAG

Ms. Barrows announced the reaching of a milestone with the release of the Coachella Valley Multiple species Habitat Conservation Plan, on October 15. The Trails Plan is a part of this package. The Plan will be under a 90-day public review and comment period. Also included in the plan are the Environmental Impact Report and Impact Statement, the

local or CEQA document for CVAG, which is the lead agency on the local side, and the Federal document for the Fish & Wildlife Service.

Plans include holding a series of public workshops on the overall plan and the Trails Plan. The Trails Plan is really more Bighorn sheep directed, and doesn't have much of a Forest Service plan impact. There will be some impact within the National Monument and the Business Plan will be addressing some of those issues. (Complete details are available in the MAC minutes transcript of this meeting.)

Schedule for FY05 Calendar – MAC

After a break, the MAC discussed meeting for the coming year. Meetings will continue to be open to the public and held at this location (Palm Desert City Council Chambers).

The DFO advised meeting from last year were held in February, June, and October. The MAC agreed to the following schedule:

- ◇ Saturday, February 5, 2005, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- ◇ Saturday, June 4, 2005, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- ◇ Saturday, October 1, 2005, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Some discussion was made regarding Forest Service Field Trips, a suggestion to hold trips in conjunction with MAC meetings, or perhaps schedule additional Saturdays for trips. Eventually, it was decided to hold trips during the week.

A trip to Santa Rosa was scheduled for November 5, depending upon weather. [**Note:** This trip was cancelled due to weather and road conditions.]

Future trips would be scheduled later in the year, dependent upon members' availability. (Complete details are available in the MAC minutes transcript of this meeting.)

National Monument Video – Frank Jones, *Palm Springs Life*

Frank Jones and company presented a four-minute segment of the National Monument High Definition video. After some comments, there was a premier of a new 60-sec. Public Service Announcement for the National Monument. Comments were made; some suggestions and Mr. Jones offered some of the venues and festivals interested in showing the video after completion. (Complete details are available in the MAC minutes transcript of this meeting.)

Public Comment

Heidi Sellers, nominee for Pinyon Pines Community took few minutes to introduce herself to the committee.

Joe Ingram, spoke about the Forest Service Draft Land Management Plan asking if any of the MAC had read the plan. Commenting how the plan does address some of the issues he himself has brought up over the years. In addition, how there are still a lot of questions to be asked about the plans. He also spoke of the illegal drug traffic-taking place throughout the Coachella Valley area. (Complete details are available in the MAC minutes transcript of this meeting.)

National Monument Update – Danella George, DFO

Updates included discussion of the status of the invasive, noxious weed program, which is moving forward toward implementation phase within the National Monument. First draft of a strategic plan has been completed and is being reviewed/edited with budget availability being a primary consideration.

Draft Interpretive Plan is under review, and we should expect to have it signed by the February meeting. Helping to promote the National Monument, *Palm Springs Life* assisted in the development of a large “Muralight” display of the *Monumental Treasures* map. In addition, we could use MAC members’ assistance in finding venues for display.

Ms. George discussed plans to recognize individuals at the National Monument Celebration and the work they’ve done. Both Representative Bono and Senator Feinstein are expected attend the celebration. A new National Monument Flag will be raised for the first time. (Complete details are available in the MAC minutes transcript of this meeting.)

National Monument Celebration – Pam Hansen, USFS/Visitor Center

Pam Hansen provided a brief overview of plans for the National Monument 4th Anniversary Celebration. (Complete details are available in the MAC minutes transcript of this meeting.)

National Monument Business Plan – Frank Mowry, BLM

Frank Mowry provided review of National Monument Business Plan, with changes being incorporated from a recent NLCS conference. Thanks were given to all the MAC members who participated during the summer with Business Plan meetings. An additional discussion was conducted with Al Muth, chair of the Natural Resources work group, on the need to have any additional meetings or to continue any additional work via e-mails. Final decision, all future work between BLM and MAC on the Business Plan would be conducted via e-mail; if any personal meeting were, required Mr. Mowry would be available to attend as necessary. During update, a brief history of how the plan started was provided as well as a projected timetable for completion – all dependent upon budget

availability. (Complete details are available in the MAC minutes transcript of this meeting.)

Highway 74 sign issues – John Ladley, USFS

Final decision has been made to keep Highway 74 sign up, until Forest Service has had a chance to investigate options of downsizing and funding has been arranged. This would including using the approved “Official” National Monument logo. (Complete details are available in the MAC minutes transcript of this meeting.)

Closing Comments/Recommendations

(Complete details are available in the MAC minutes transcript of this meeting.)

Adjournment

Complete minutes and all submitted written comments are available for public review at the Palm Springs/south coast Field Office during business hours: P.O. box 581260, 690 West Garnet Avenue, North Palm Springs, CA 92258; 760-251-4800